



Herb Kohl Educational Foundation, Inc.
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent



***** NEWS RELEASE *****

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Nekoosa music educator named Special Services Teacher of the Year

Sharon Gilbert of Nekoosa School District to receive \$3,000 from Herb Kohl Educational Foundation

MADISON—State Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster announced that Sharon Gilbert of the Nekoosa School District has been named the Wisconsin Special Services Teacher of the Year.

Gilbert, who lives in Stevens Point, was nominated as a music teacher at Alexander Middle School in the Nekoosa School District. She is currently a music teacher at Humke Elementary School, also in Nekoosa. Her passion for using music to reach students on many levels and her dedication to fostering success for every learner are among the many assets noted by her colleagues.

Gilbert received the news from Burmaster in a surprise award ceremony at her school today. As part of the honor, Gilbert will receive a \$3,000 award from U. S. Senator Herb Kohl, through his educational foundation. This is the second year the Herb Kohl Educational Foundation has supported the Wisconsin Teacher of the Year awards. As of August, the foundation has awarded \$6.7 million to Wisconsin educators, students, and schools.

“Sharon Gilbert is the prime example of a teacher who understands that for students, the arts are not a ‘frill,’ but a vital wellspring in which to discover the energy and self-esteem they need to succeed,” Burmaster said. “Sharon uses music to teach global literacy to students, tutors students who are struggling, and has co-chaired a reinvigoration of the Wisconsin Music Education Association’s Music Listening Project. Most of all, those who know Sharon praise her strength, her positivity, her dedication, and her passion—qualities that have changed the lives of colleagues and students.”

“I know that the future of this state and nation rests in the hands of our students,” said Kohl. “I support our Teacher of the Year awards because they recognize the work of outstanding educators and help ensure that strong, capable, caring teachers are educating tomorrow’s leaders.”

(more)

Among Gilbert's achievements is the creation of a guitar class for her students. Gilbert knew adolescents are often drawn to the guitar. However, creating a class on the instrument entailed surmounting some obstacles: the school owned only one guitar, and Gilbert herself did not know how to play it. Single-handedly, she raised the money to purchase enough guitars for a classroom and enrolled in guitar lessons. The class began less than a year later and continues today.

Gilbert holds two music education degrees from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. Burmaster will honor Gilbert on Sept. 18 during her State of Education speech and awards ceremony at the State Capitol in Madison.

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NOTE: This news release will be available electronically at http://dpi.wi.gov/eis/pdf/dpi2008_127c.pdf, after Friday, September 5, 2008. Additional information about the Herb Kohl Educational Foundation is available at <http://www.kohleducation.org/>.